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SUBJECT: Transboundary Parks and CREMAS: West African Natural
Resource Conservation

1. Summary: Kyabobo National Park in the Volta Region of Ghana represents a growing trend in Ghanaian natural resource conservation. Bordering the Kue River with Togo, Kyabobo seeks to form a transboundary national park with the Togolese Fazo-Malfakassa National Park to create wildlife corridors and harmonize conservation practices such as anti-poaching patrols and prosecution. Communities adjacent to Kyabobo have collaborated with the Ghanaian Wildlife Division to establish a Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) in which community members derive economic and social benefits for conserving natural resources. Transboundary parks and CREMAS represent positive conservation practices for West Africa. End Summary.

Bigger is Better: Creation of Transboundary Park

2. Kyabobo National Park in Ghana and Fazo-Malfakassa National Park in Togo represent upper Guinean forest and savanna habitats home to a variety of animals including elephants, leopards, and primates. Being almost eight times larger (1,920 square kilometers), Fazo-Malfakassa has more biodiversity including the elephants, but suffers from a small and demotivated staff and poaching. Kyabobo, however, has a larger more professional staff, efficient anti-poaching patrols utilizing camps within the park and GPS tracking systems, and surrounding community participation in natural resource conservation through the CREMA resulting in overall better conservation efforts -- something Fazo-Malfakassa lacks. Creation of a transboundary park would serve several synergistic positive effects: creation of wildlife corridors, harmonization of conservation and management practices, and shared resources to maximize effects in a climate of limiting funding.

Community Resource Management Areas: Exportable Lesson

3. Ghana currently administers three community resource management areas (CREMAS), including the one in Kyabobo. The philosophy of the CREMA is when the government provides the right conditions and incentives people will manage their natural resources sustainably. CREMAS are managed by Community Resource Management Committees (CRMCs) consisting of local chiefs and other stakeholders. The CRMCs seek to promote economic and social benefits through activities targeting nature (i.e. park guides and entrance fees), adventure (i.e. camping and biking) and culture (i.e. home stays and crafts).

4. CRMCs have been successful on several fronts including establishing wildlife conservation centers to engage youth in environmental education programs as well as camping trips to the park to view animals and enjoy nature. Partnering with NGOs, CREMAS have advanced alternative successful economic activities such as beekeeping and breeding of grasscutters. CRMCs also serve to enforce the CREMA framework at the community level for example by

requiring an application by individuals to harvest products from the forest including nuts and fuelwood. Members of the CRMCs also serve as the eyes and ears on the ground regarding activities in the CREMA and national park.

Comment: Conservation Messages Resonate with Communities

15. In a meeting with community chiefs and other stakeholders that were involved in the formation of the Kyabobo CREMA several lessons learned were discussed by members to gain community support for natural resource conservation. CREMAS are easier to establish around a national park then extending existing park boundaries. CREMAS are seen to incorporate more local community control to preserve their natural resources for future generations and from others outside the community. Sensitization of communities to wildlife can inspire conservation. One comment heard over and over was that individuals had never seen an elephant but when CRMC members traveled to Mole National Park in northern Ghana and saw the elephants they saw the possibility of wildlife conservation in Kyabobo. A final message discussed among CRMC members that seemed to strongly resonate in support of the CREMAS is the changing rainfall patterns and the link between forest conservation and sufficient rainfall.

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